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A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

THE NEW CHURCH ORDER AND MISSIONS
Harry R. Boer

FROM GENEVA TO GINDIRI (II)
Lester DeKoster

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD
James Daane

THE ROOTS OF THE CALVINISTIC DAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT (IV)
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The New Church Order and Missions

by Harry R. Boer

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH is in process of revising the Church Order that has governed her up to now. The adoption of the revised form will be an event of moment in the life of the church. The revision that is being proposed should receive careful public consideration. The draft which it has officially submitted for Synod's consideration has appeared in the 1957 Acts of Synod. This draft will best serve its purpose not by being hastily adopted but by becoming the basis for careful and penetrating discussion.

The purpose of this article is a limited one. It proposes to examine the place accorded in the revision to the missionary outreach of the church, and to consider the implications of certain sections in it for the church's evangelistic witness.

THE COMMITTEE is to be commended for having introduced into the proposed revision an essential element of the church's task which is lamentably underestimated in the present Church Order. Except for a reference to church extension and the purely formal recognition of missions in Article 51 ("The Missionary Work of the Church is regulated by the General Synod in a Mission Order"), there is no reference made in the present instrument to the missionary task of the church. In the revision, the whole of Article 70 is given to the subject, and explicit references are made to it in at least four other articles. Missions and evangelism promise to become constitutive elements in the church's basic instrument of government in a manner that is foreign to the present Order.

The giving of larger prominence to missions in the new Church Order does not in itself, however, guarantee that justice will be done to the place which this basic aspect of the church's task deserves in the constitution of the church. It is in this connection that I wish to make a few observations.

A good way to begin the discussion is to quote Article 70 of the proposed revision:

> Each church is privileged and in duty bound to bring the gospel to those who do not know Christ and salvation in Him. This task shall, wherever possible, be left to the particular churches, who may execute it singly or in co-operation with one or more neighboring churches. Only if the scope of the work puts it beyond the sphere of local or classical supervision, shall it be undertaken by Synod, in which case it shall be regulated by a Synodical Mission Order.

This is a basic statement, it is explicit and comprehensive, and it bears the earmarks of Reformed polity. In passing it may be said that the article suffers, as do many other parts of the revision, from a pronounced tendency to be homiletical and devotional. The Church Order is a *legal* instrument and it should be enough to say, "Each church shall bring the gospel . . . etc." The being privileged and in duty bound add nothing to the juridical character of the article and in effect weaken it as a constitutional statement.

The question must seriously be raised, however, whether this statement, basic and comprehensive though it is, is not neutralized and deprived of effectiveness by other elements in the revision which indicate how the task is to be taken in hand. How does the revision propose to implement the statement of the church's missionary calling?

Let us first note the spirit that comes to expression in the specification of the duties of ministers and elders. There is a marked difference in the revision between the manner in which it specifies the traditional duties of ministers and elders, and the manner in which it specifies their relationship to evangelism. Consider what Article 6 says: "The task of the minister is to preach the Word and administer the sacraments; to lead the congregation in its prayers; to teach catechism classes; to visit the sick; to exercise pastoral care over the congregation, assisting the elders faithfully in their home visitation work; and to help exercise Christian discipline." Then, in a separate sentence, the article concludes, "He shall also endeavor to bring the gospel to the unconverted of the community." The difference is plain. The task of the minister *is* to preach, to administer, to lead, to teach, to visit, to exercise, to help exercise. It is plainly his duty *to do* these things. Evangelism, however, is something with which he is "also" concerned, and he is not to *do* it, but to *endeavor* to do it. It is not the minister's duty to endeavor to preach, to endeavor to administer the sacraments, etc., but to preach, to administer. Why is the evangelistic duty put in a separate sentence, in terms of an "also" and as an "endeavor"?

The relationship of the elders to evangelism is the same as that of the ministers. They have plainly defined duties in the church (Article 22): to see to it that their fellow officers faithfully discharge their offices, to visit families, to exercise Christian discipline, and to see to it that everything is done decently and in order. Then, in a separate sentence again, "The elders shall also seek to inform and exhort unbelievers regarding the Christian faith."

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For the elders, too, evangelism is an "also," their evangelistic duty is laid down in a separate sentence, and they are not directly required to take this work in hand as they are with respect to their other duties.

If each church is "in duty bound" to bring the gospel to those who do not know Christ, why is this duty, in distinction from other duties, reduced to an "also," and to an "endeavoring" and a "seeking" to do it? Moreover, no mention is made at all of the place of the deacons in community evangelism and in missions.

Would it not be better to eliminate the questionable sentences in these articles altogether and, instead of charging the officers of the church separately in this respect, lay a clear mandate upon the *consistory* to give leadership in the implementation of the evangelistic duty which Article 70 lays upon the churches?

Another evidence of missionary subordination comes to expression, and that prominently, in the article devoted to the work of professors of theology (Article 18). This article strengthens the traditional notion that the exclusive task of the seminary is to teach men how to take care only of their own congregations. It reads: "Ministers of the Word who are appointed as professors of theology are to expound the Word of God to the students, to warn them against heresies, and to instruct them how to be teachers and shepherds to the flock. These duties are more fully described in the Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology." Where in this wording does the preparation of an evangelistic and missionary ministry fall within the scope of the seminary's task?

WE NOW TURN TO two matters of ecclesiastical relationships as they bear upon the missionary enterprise. The church will do well to scrutinize closely the first part of Article 29 as set forth in the revision. It reads: "Groups of believers among whom no consistory can as yet be constituted shall be placed under the care of a neighboring consistory." The Home Mission Board proposed to the Synod of 1957 that we "refrain from speaking of branch churches and the organization of branch churches under the supervision of the neighboring consistory." The Synod looked favorably upon this and upon other proposals to give the home missionaries more authority and freedom of movement, but postponed final action. Meanwhile, it did accept another proposal of the Home Missions Board, namely: "Synod recognize the authority of the missionary, in consultation with and by permission of those supervising his work, to receive professions of faith and to administer the sacraments to members of the church, though these have not yet been organized into self-governing congregations" (*Acts* 1957, p. 100). This provision alone excludes the idea that unorganized groups of believers arising out of mission work be under the supervision of a neighboring consistory. It avails little to give home missionaries authority to receive professions of faith and administer the sacraments "by permission of those supervising his work" if the people concerned are under the supervision of a neighboring consistory. The home missionaries have this authority by virtue of their calling as prescribed in the Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Missionaries. In short, Article 29 of the revision in effect seems to call for the branch-church method of mission work which is in serious question among us.

The other matter is more formal in character and arises from Article 7 as proposed, which reads as follows: "Ministers of the Gospel who work as home missionaries or foreign missionaries shall be called as stipulated in Articles 4 and 5. Their work may be regulated in conjunction with classical or synodical committees, but they shall without exception be responsible to their calling and commissioning churches." Presumably "home missionaries" refers only to ordained ministers working under the direction of the Board of Home Missions, and "foreign missionaries" only to ministers working under the direction of the Board of Indian and Foreign Missions. If this is so, how can it be said that their work "may be" regulated "in conjunction with" classical or synodical committees? The "may" suggests that there are alternatives in the manner of regulation; the "be regulated" raises the question who the regulating agent is and nothing is said in answer to the question; and the "in conjunction with" seems to suggest that the directing authority is not single but multiple. The accepted facts of the matter are that the work of the missionaries *is* regulated, and is regulated *only*, by their respective boards and mission orders.

It is also stated that "they shall without exception be responsible to their calling and commissioning churches." Why the "without exception" The words "they shall be responsible" are all inclusive and adequate. The question must also be asked, responsible for what? And what is meant by a "commissioning" in addition to a "calling" church? Should it not be simply stated that ordained home and foreign missionaries are in the discharge of their work subject to their respective Mission Orders and Boards, and for their doctrine and life to the consistories of their calling churches?

WE MUST NOW as a final consideration turn to a matter of theology as reflected in the Church Order, namely, the admission of adults to the Lord's table. This bears directly upon evangelism since

it involves the question of conditions for church membership. The draft Church Order perpetuates what seems to me to be an unscriptural position in the present Church Order, namely, that none may be admitted to the table of the Lord except those who confess the Reformed religion (Article 61). In making this stipulation both the present Church Order and the revision would seem to involve themselves in a self-contradition. This contradiction comes to expression in connection with the provisions relating to excommunication.

In Article 78 of the revision we read, "He who persistently rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be excommunicated from the Christian Church." Article 79 provides that when a person so excommunicated repents he shall, if there are no valid objections, "be publicly restored to the fellowship of the Church of Christ . . . ." In both of these Articles, as also in the Form for Excommunication, it is clear that reference is had to excommunication from the *Church of Christ* without any reference to denominational affiliation. Excommunication is not from the Christian Reformed Church, but from the *whole* Church of Christ, wheresoever situate, whether in heaven or on earth. The excommunicated person is declared no longer to have part in Christ and is therefore severed from that one, holy, catholic, and apostolic body known as the Church.

When we now consider how, according to Articles 64 to 66 of the revision, people are admitted to church membership, it is quite clear that whereas excommunication is from the Church of Christ without denominational reference, one is admitted into the Church in a definitely denominational (in the sense of Reformed confessional) context. Although the draft revision does not explicitly say that members gained by evangelism must make a confession of the Reformed religion, it does require them to make a "proper" confession of faith. In the light of Articles 65 and 66 which deal with the admission to the Lord's table of members by baptism and the reception of members coming from other churches, there can be no doubt that "proper" here can only mean Reformed, although it does seem strange that whereas "Reformed" is used explicitly in the latter two Articles "proper" is used in the former.

It is, I believe, right to assume that no Reformed church would ever excommunicate anyone who lived a Christian life in confession and walk but who came to disbelieve a distinctively Reformed theological position and who refused upon being labored with to acquiesce in that position. This *cannot* be done because excommunication is by definition not excommunication from a denomination but *from Christ*. I quite fail to comprehend how the Church into which one is received upon *acceptance* of Christ can be more narrowly qualified than the Church from which one is excommunicated upon *rejection* of Christ. By what scriptural norm do we make the condition for admission to the communion table more embracing than the condition for banishment from it?

If, on the other hand, we accept the idea that seems to be making some headway among us, that anyone who makes a credible profession of Christ is "in principle" Reformed, what sense does it make to require members by baptism and those coming from other churches to be "Reformed" before they can be admitted to full membership or to membership in our churches? I believe that Reformed ought to mean *Reformed*. I believe that it is a flat contradiction of the intent of the present Church Order to say that anyone who is a Christian is "really" Reformed and may therefore be admitted to the Lord's table not simply because he confesses Christ in the evangelical sense of the word but because he is thereby considered to be Reformed. There is no quicker way to emasculate the word Reformed of all it stands for and to deprive it of its integrity and meaning than to talk in this way.

It is not possible to require that the confession of the Reformed religion be a condition for church membership and at the same time accept anyone who makes a credible profession of Christ. In other writing I have endeavored to show why, in the light of the nature of the Church and the scriptural, credal and theological meaning of baptism, it is not warranted to require a specifically Reformed confession from those who wish to enter the Christian Reformed Church. I wish to re-enforce that argument now in connection with the Church Order revision. The Christian Reformed Church maintains a condition for church membership, namely, to be Reformed in addition to the credible profession of faith in Christ. When this additional condition is broken, the church is not prepared to enforce it to the point of excommunication. But when a man ceases to be a Christian the broken condition of credible profession of Christ is enforced to the point of having recourse to excommunication. Why is this not done when a member ceases to be Reformed. Is a fault which keeps a man out of the church to be tolerated when he is in it? It would seem that it is in order to study anew what the visible church really is.

THE REVISION of the Church Order is an important event in the life of the church. We will most help and honor those who are directly charged with the preparation of the revision by studying their work carefully, sympathetically, and critically. This should be done publicly as well as privately and in group discussions so that the revision which will finally become effective will reflect not only a scriptural and Reformed polity, but also the mind and understanding of the church.

From Geneva to Gindiri (II)

by Lester DeKoster

PART ONE

TO THE September issue of this *Journal* I contributed an article entitled "From Geneva to Gindiri." It dealt with the question of Christian Reformed participation in the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN).

Because this piece entered upon a subject of some controversy, I prefaced the body of my discussion with a brief comment on how differences of opinion among fellow believers, also on doctrinal matters, may become steppingstones to spiritual unity among them — even if the differences are not resolved. I concluded that preface as follows: "What Calvin clearly teaches however, from the beginning of his literary life to its close, is that the welfare of the church hangs, as it were, not upon whether or not there be differences, but upon what use the disputants make of their disputing. Do they learn humility and docility, deeper insight and fuller love? Then will the church prosper. I advance the opinions which follow, desirous only of adhering to Calvin's teaching. . . ." I now do the same again.

I intend, in this article, to elaborate my original argument and to consider some criticism of it.

Beyond the introduction summarized above, my original article had but a single purpose: to weigh an objection voiced against our participation in the TCNN. I can *specify* that purpose best in words quoted from the article: "And so I choose to begin, as in rebuttal, by discussing first of all those arguments commonly advanced against our participation in the school. I shall start with those called 'most weighty' by their adherents."

The first of these "most weighty" arguments is put as a dilemma, which I summed up as follows: "Either our representative (and presumably each other denomination's representative) on the faculty of the TCNN will tone down those doctrinal tenets which distinguish him from his colleagues; or, if he does not do so, estrangement and bitterness among the professors will inevitably follow. This is the contention." In short: "accept compromise or choose conflict, if we go into the TCNN."

I then sought, with confirmation from the writings of Calvin, to demonstrate that when Christian brethren hold different views on important doctrinal issues, these differences need by no means lead inevitably either to compromise or to conflict. Differences may in fact, as I suggested in my introduction, quoting Calvin, become means to "brotherly love and communion."

I then drew illustrations from the life and teaching of Calvin to show that this contention is true.

Calvin and Bucer

For example, I had already noted in my introduction that, in one of his letters to Bucer, Calvin charged Bucer's *Commentary on the Psalms* with overturning "from its foundations the doctrine of justification by faith." This doctrine Calvin himself calls "the principal point of Christian doctrine" (*Commentary on Acts* 15:7). And yet, as I pointed out, having thus frankly challenged Bucer's error to, as it were, Bucer's face, Calvin goes on in the same letter to salute him as a man of "most excellent gifts besides your piety," and blesses him in closing, as follows: "May the Lord preserve you and increase in you his gifts, most worthy and dearest brother."

Does Calvin say "brother" here? Indeed he does. Reflect with me briefly what that means. What wider gap might have yawned between two giants of the Reformation than a difference on "justification by faith?" How does Calvin treat this difference? Not by compromise of his own views! He states his mind plainly enough. Nor by bitter conflict! For he embraces his "brother" even as he combats his error. So — I suggested — we should act: no compromise; no bitterness: not at Gindiri — nor at home!

I could easily enough have extended the list of complaints Calvin had against Bucer; and it would have been easy to find out those Bucer had against Calvin. In 1538, for example, Calvin is writing to Farel, "It is this which displeases me in Bucer: he reproaches us too severely with having sinned, and then he adds, but where is there a better, where a more learned man? I should be more pleased, if, instead of praising us so much, he less readily accused us of error" (Henry, I, 137). So early, then, in their relationship were seeds of possibly strife sown between them. But as Calvin works on his *Romans,* in 1539, he praises Bucer's "recondite learning and enlarged knowledge . . . clearness of mind . . . and many other excellencies . . . equalled by few and excelled by still fewer. . ." (preface to *Romans*).

I shall refer later to yet another difference between these men, but the relationship remains the same. To Bucer, and about Bucer, Calvin spoke unequivocally: no compromise. Ah yes, but no

bitterness either! Calvin knew how to make differences into stepping stones to communion.

Calvin and Melancthon

Nor were Calvin's relations with Bucer an isolated example of how he discovered, even as he taught, unity-in-difference.

We are not the first to pause a while and ponder the meaning of Calvin's long years of spiritual association with Melancthon. The two of them differed — in temperament and in doctrine — widely and lifelong; and yet they were so inseparably bound together in love and respect that this is typical of Calvin's writing to Melancthon: "would to God we could speak together. Your ability, your love of truth, and meekness are well known to me; and the angels and the whole world bear witness of your piety. I do not doubt therefore but that we shall soon be wholly agreed on this subject [the sacrament]. Fain would I come to you, and embrace you once more before we leave this world" (Henry, I, 238).

And on the Lord's Supper they did, after a fashion, become agreed. But on other doctrines they could not find agreement. Calvin writes: "For myself, I openly confess that my conscience will not allow me to yield in this point; for you seem to write of free-will too philosophically; and when election is spoken of, you will only accommodate yourself to the common notions of the human understanding" (Henry I, 200).

Note once more that the issue between these "brethren" is no minor one: free will and election! Dr. L. Praamsma speaks the mind of Calvinists all when he names election as first of the doctrines typically Calvin's own (*Calvijn,* 263). It is true that Melancthon once (in response to the dedication to him of Calvin's reply to Pighius) writes: "I know also that what I say [on election] is in perfect agreement with your own ideas" (Henry I, 500). But Calvin never really thought so, and writes to John Sleidan in 1554: "I know not how much I ought to congratulate myself on Philip's agreement with me in one thing (the sacrament), since in the most important matters, catching at the approbation even of the philosophers, he openly opposes sound doctrine; or lest he should provoke the resentment of certain persons, he cunningly, or at least, with but little manliness, disguises his own opinion" (Bonnet, III, 58).

Shall we try to measure what this difference in "most important matters" between himse'f and Melancthon meant to Calvin? And, yet, need I repeat it, there was between them unity-in-difference, with no compromise and no bitterness.

Or, to choose one more illustration, listen to Calvin in 1551 when he hears that Melancthon leans toward accepting the Leipzig Interim, a scheme for bringing at least political peace between the Reformation and Rome. Calvin minces no words: "Vacillation in so great a man is not to be tolerated. I would a hundred times rather die with you, than see you survive a doctrine which you had betrayed" (Henry II, 28).

So now is it all over between them — with bitterness in the air?

No. It was never "all over" between them. And after Melancthon is dead, in 1560, Calvin muses over the past: "Philip, thou who art in the bosom of God. . . .How often, when thou wast oppressed by chagrin and lassitude, and sweetly reposed thy head upon my bosom, didst thou say to me: Ah! would to God I might die upon this cherished bosom! A thousand times, have I, on my part, desired to live with thee: I would have cherished thee on to combat; I would have taught thee to despise envy and calumny . . ." (Audin, 224).

In death, as in life, Melancthon was to Calvin "a man whom I love and esteem above all others, and whom God has not only nobly enriched with extraordinary gifts, to render him conspicuous in the sight of all the church, but has made him his chief servant, and appointed him to conduct the most important affairs" (Henry, I, 238).

As I say, the explanation of Calvin's union with Melancthon has interested men long before this.

Not that Calvin's enemies have any serious difficulty. The Catholic calumniator, J.M.V. Audin, *knows* that Calvin's protestations of love for Melancthon were *lies*: "What then," Audin scoffs, "becomes of that symbolical fellowship with the Wittenburg professor, which Calvin with such joy proclaims to his friend Farel, when yesterday he was still talking to us, concerning the lying opinion of Melancthon on the Lord's supper"? (p. 224).

Witness in M. Audin yet another man who has to learn that frank expression of differing opinions on grave matters is not — in the grace of God — an impediment to love and fellowship among believers in Christ. Sneers this Audin, a page later: "Calvin in eternity, beside the theologian who believed in the real presence; in the same glory with Melancthon, who so often exclaimed anathema against the sacramentarians!" (p. 225).

Yes, M. Audin, both together, in eternity, as God wills.

And we will follow Calvin, who took differences seriously and who strove mightily to teach his friend what he believed to be God's truth; but who, in so doing, made of his differences with Melancthon steps to "brotherly love and communion."

And how was this possible? Let Calvin answer: "They take a narrow and disparaging view of the works of God, who believe that he will do no more than nature holds out to be probable, as if his hand were limited to our senses or confined to earthly means. But it belongs to faith to believe

that more can be done than carnal reason admits" (on Luke 1:18).

To those who measure unity, as it were, in ounces; and who measure differences, as it were, in pounds — to their "carnal reason" it is self-evident that so much in difference must be removed if so much in unity is to be weighed. But Calvin taught us better things. Take, said he, no such "narrow and disparaging view of the works of God." No, not in Gindiri; and not at home, either! And he left us his example: Calvin and Melancthon: differing in doctrine, on matters grave; united in spirit; and together at last in the hand of God!

But even some of Calvin's friends pass lightly over the meaning of his relations with the "teacher of Germany." So, for example, does Dr. Praamsma, whose book I have already mentioned. He tells his readers, indeed, more than once, that Calvin had translated into French and printed at Geneva, in 1546, the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon (not, in fact, in one edition but two — also in 1551) with a commendatory preface from Calvin's own hand. But what was in this book?

Answer: a view of free will and of election quite different from Calvin's own. Melancthon was at least mildly Arminian before Arminius! And Calvin has the book translated and printed — twice!

What, then, can this solicitude of Calvin's for that book mean? Dr. Praamsma does not ask this question, and so is not likely to answer it. He notes only that Calvin in this way exhibits the "moderation" with which he held the doctrine of predestination. So Dr. Praamsma recognizes, too, that the *Loci* differ from Calvin's doctrinal views. But let us ask the question for ourselves: why did Calvin promote a book expounding doctrinal opinions differing from his own? Why did he endorse it with a preface excusing that difference by saying: "Since he (Melancthon) sees at present so many light-minded persons who abandon themselves too much to curiosity, and observe no moderation in this matter, in order to avoid this danger, he has chosen to treat only of what is necessary to be known, and to leave the rest as it were, bulied . . ." (Dyer, 223). But Calvin himself *will not* "leave the rest" buried!

However this surprising conduct may be explained, or explained away, it will hardly do to accuse Calvin of dissimulation or compromise. At least, he was as willing to listen, and to have others listen, to Melancthon as he was determined that Melancthon should listen to him, believing that the issue between them would only be settled by deeper understanding of the Scriptures. And so he writes to Melancthon in 1554: "Nor do I prescribe this law for the removal of our discrepancy that you should assent to me, but at least let us not be ashamed to subscribe to the sacred oracles of God. And, indeed, whatever method of reconciling our differences it shall please you to adopt, that I will gladly embrace" (Schwarz, II, 29). And while the differences remained, as in fact they did for Melancthon's lifetime, it was neither compromise nor bitterness between them.

And Others

And in my first article I illustrated how Calvin had likewise differed with others of his "brethren" without compromise or bitterness: with Luther on the Lord's Supper, and under the stinging lash of Luther's fearful temper; with Bullinger on the means to unity; and so one might go on searching out of Calvin's life similar examples of how he maintained communion with fellow believers through wide differences in doctrinal conceptions existed among them. I think, indeed, that one might show how Calvin extended the right hand of love far across the line he held as orthodox, never tiring of teaching and of listening, and always setting himself resolutely against strife, envy, bitterness, and hatred.

So I concluded the article which I have now been amplifying by asking: "Have we, then, but the sorry choice between compromise or conflict in Nigeria?" And I replied: "We can give the answer in Calvin's own words: 'On the contrary . . .'!"

Epilogue

There is, of course, another picture of Calvin abroad in the world. I need not sketch it. Let it simply be confessed that he, like all men, fell short of his own ideals. When his pen was dipped in venom, it struck deep. But the model he would have us emulate is not that which his enemies delight to forge from scraps of his writings. Let them dig for his lapses, for his vituperations, for his estrangements. And let us, then, match each new indictment with Calvin's own repentance.

For he knew his faults. Of a meeting with Caroli he writes, "I sinned grievously . . ." (Bonnet, I, 130). To Zerkinden, in 1558: "I confess that I am irritable, and though this vice displeases me, I have not succeeded in curing myself of it as much as I could wish . . . . Though after all in the harshness of my language, which I declare has been wrung from me against my will, I am not so very morose as to feel offended, because people do not applaud me" (Bonnet, III, 429).

Consider, too, his circumstances, if we his friends sometimes wonder at his excesses: he was hardly ever free from threat of bodily harm, and he accurately predicted the kind of opposition he would meet for his life long, in his famous reply to Sadolet: "I declined not to restore peace to the Church at the expense of my head, if I were found to have been unnecessarily the cause of tumult. But

what did our opponents? Did they not instantly, and like madmen, fly to fires, swords, and gibbets? Did they not decide that their only security was in arms and cruelty? Did they not instigate all ranks to the same fury? Did they not spurn all methods of pacification?" (Beveridge, I, 60).

Or consider his health: ". . . the gout, the stone, the gravel, the cholic, the piles . . . internal hemorrhage; all these maladies have at once pounced upon me like an inimical horde," he writes to his doctors near the close of his life. But he only enumerates (with several omissions — like headache, coughing, asthma) those maladies which singly or together tormented him always.

Withal he strove mightily for self-control: "It is well known how mild and humane Viret is; and I am no rougher, at least in this respect. You will scarcely believe it, yet so it is. I take the preservation of peace and unity so to heart, that I do violence to myself. My friends must allow me this praise" (Henry, I, 333).

I dare say his friends do allow him "this praise," perhaps just to the extent that they are willing to "take the preservation of peace and unity so to heart, that" they, too, do "violence to" themselves. And these friends may hope to join all other admirers of Calvin in the words which Calvin uses in this same letter: "May the Lord grant that I may always retain this feeling, great as is the resistance with which I have to struggle."

Perhaps we might allow ourselves the luxury of bitterness after we have suffered, and resisted the temptation, as much as he. But with his prayer on our lips, we may work with confidence at Gindiri — and at home!

* * * * *

I have made this extended summary and amplification of my September article primarily to reemphasize its conclusion that compromise or conflict are not the only alternatives open to Christians who differ. But I have wished also to preface a response to some criticism of that piece.

The criticism is from the hand of Dr. L. Praamsma of Toronto. I have already alluded to his book, *Calvijn*.

For those who may not have seen the three articles which Dr. Praamsma contributed to *Church and Nation*, a weekly circulated largely in Canada, under the title "From Gindiri to Geneva," I shall summarize his criticism as I discuss it. This method of summary-response may remind those who have seen his articles that Dr. Praamsma gives his readers no condensation of my piece, nor does he seem to discern for himself the single purpose for which my article was written. Had Dr. Praamsma heeded for himself, and published for his readers, the statement I quoted at the beginning of this article, setting out the theme of my argument, he might have spread less misconception abroad, however much less persuasive his criticism might then have come to be.

Dr. Praamsma's articles were advertised as an "analysis" of mine. I presume he did not write the advertisement. For a criticism can hardly be termed an "analysis" if it fails to reckon explicitly with an author's clear statement of why the piece under "analysis" was written. And I think my statement of purpose was both clear and brief: I was discussing the first "weighty objection" to our participation in the TCNN. No reader could discover this fact from one, or a dozen, readings of Dr. Praamsma's three articles. This analytical omission is not only a surprising lapse; it also has consequences.

In the first place, it is axiomatic that one can hardly charge a writer with missing his goal unless one first ascertains at what the writer was aiming. And so, just to change the figure, Dr. Praamsma will soon be found, I think, to have been telling me that I was on the wrong road without his even having troubled to inquire where it was that I intended to go.

In the second place, it is the gist of Dr. Praamsma's "analysis" that I "misinterpret" my quotations from John Calvin. It is evident that Dr. Praamsma forgets the function of quotation. Why does one writer quote from another? For only one purpose: to support a line of argument! Ah, but how, then, can Dr. Praamsma hope to show, and how can Dr. Praamsma's readers fairly judge if he has shown, that Calvin has been "misinterpreted" or "misquoted" (I am charged with both) unless Dr. Praamsma first explicitly lays bare the line of argument which the quotations from Calvin were given to support?

I think I say accurately that Dr. Praamsma not only neglects the intent of my article, but he also does not expressly dissent from my conclusion though I infer that he argues from the unexpressed premise that some differences among believers should drive them asunder.

However this may be, I shall give as clear a picture as I can of what Dr. Praamsma does say — though this will unduly extend the length of my reply — and I shall respond to all of his criticisms. And if, in so doing, I am obliged to talk more about myself and my works than anyone should, please remember what Demosthenes said to the Athenians as he prepared to answer Aeschines: this is the only way one has of correcting misapprehension of what one has said.

The Criticism

The reader may have been struck by Dr. Praamsma's choice of title: "From Gindiri to Geneva." This is an inversion of my own: "From Geneva to Gindiri." There is, however, this difference be-

tween us: my title indicated that my article would try to show that Geneva did, indeed, have something relevant to say to Gindiri; but what, on the other hand, Gindiri can possibly have to say to Geneva, these four hundred years after, is a secret which — understandably — Dr. Praamsma keeps to himself.

He is happy, Dr. Praamsma begins, *that* Calvin is being quoted. But he has "little admiration for" my "choice and interpretation of quotations at this point." The "point" in reference here is my contention, quoted by Dr. Praamsma from my article: "in the spirit of Calvin, that whatever our differences remain, we may yet be drawn closer together."

There are, then, two prongs, so to speak, on Dr. Praamsma's fork: my *choice* of, and my *interpretation* of quotations from Calvin.

The First Objection

This first "prong" — choice of quotations — Dr. Praamsma employs in one brief paragraph, and so I can quote it all: "As to choice of quotations, I ask, for instance, what about Castellio? What about Bo[l]sec? What about the Anabaptists? What about the Sozzini's? What about Servet? Etc., Etc. Secondly, as to interpretation . . . ." And this leads to the rest of his criticism.

Well, as I pointed out a moment ago: the choice of quotations is governed by an author's purpose. Why, then, did I choose quotations which illustrated Calvin's relations with *fellow believers* like Bucer and Melancthon, rather than quotations which exhibited his relations with *notorious enemies* like those Dr. Praamsma names?

If Dr. Praamsma had asked this question seriously, instead of as a passing rhetorical thrust, he might have restudied my article to ascertain its purpose; and then he could have answered the question himself.

My article revolved about one focus: when *fellow believers,* like those at Gindiri, differ on important issues, is it necessarily compromise or bitterness among them? And the answer I gave was NO. Then I quoted from Calvin to substantiate this answer. So, of course, I selected quotations and illustrations which exhibited Calvin's relations with *fellow believers.*

This is the simple answer to Dr. Praamsma's question.

I would not know if he means to suggest that Gindiri will unite us with a Castellio, a Bolsec, or a Servet(us), all of whom Calvin viewed as stiff-necked in their heresies. If he does, and can offer some ground for so doing, we might pursue that phase of the matter further. I will stand on the conviction that our associates at Gindiri are our brethren in Jesus Christ, "fellow believers" who differ with us as some of Calvin's "fellow believers" differed with him.

It has been suggested, I know, that present-day Baptists (who *will be* represented in the TCNN) are akin to those Anabaptists whom Calvin so belabored. But the author of this suggestion (who signifies approval of Dr. Praamsma's "analysis") will find, perhaps to his surprise, that in the *Gereformeerd Weekblad* of September 19, 1952, Dr. Praamsma himself took some pains to suggest that present-day Baptists are by no means of one theological color with Calvin's-day Anabaptists. Dr. Praamsma maintains that Calvinists and Baptists can join hands, and work together, both in and outside of the International Council of Christian Churches. So, oddly enough, I may refer the argument that John Calvin would not have joined today's Baptists at Gindiri to the writings of Dr. Praamsma for refutation.

But to return to his question: why not Castellio, etc?

I can say, briefly, this in reply: while we can all, in fact, learn a good deal also from the manner in which Calvin maintained his differences with the men Dr. Praamsma mentions (Calvin reports, for example, that in relation to Servetus: "I tenderly reminded him, that sixteen years before, I had diligently sought, at the hourly peril of my life, to win him to the Lord . . . that, in a word, no duty of kindness had been neglected on my part . . ." [Henry II, 218]), I say, we might learn that Calvin strove against both compromise and bitterness also in relation to his enemies; yet I am certain that we want as a model, and Gindiri will reflect, Calvin's relations with his friends.

The Second Objection

Let us turn next to Dr. Praamsma's second contention, namely, that I "misinterpret" Calvin.

Dr. Praamsma writes: "Secondly, as to the interpretation of quotations, any good church historian knows that Calvin wrote a fine treatise on the same topic in question, 'Vera Christianae Pacificationis et Ecclesiae Reformandai Ratio.' Why didn't br. De Koster quote this work?"

I may remind the reader that when Dr. Praamsma asks why I did not "quote" from the treatise he mentions, he is still criticizing my *choice of* quotations; that is, he is still on "firstly" and not, as he says, on "Secondly . . . ." I would not halt at so minor a matter, except that it reflects once more the carelessness of Dr. Praamsma's "analysis."

A matter not so minor here, however, is this: I wonder if Dr. Praamsma is once more making a rhetorical feint, or does he really want to know, "Why didn't br. DeKoster quote this work"? Were he in earnest, why didn't he return to my article and find the answer there? Might he not

have discerned that, in fact, my article and this treatise do *not* deal "with the same topic in question," except incidentally?

The treatise to which Dr. Praamsma refers has been translated into Dutch under the title: *Om de eenheid en vrede der Kerk* (On the Unity and Peace of the Church). Literally its title is: The True Method of Christian Peace-Making and of Reforming the Church.

And so this, then, is indeed *the* "topic in question"? The whole, vast, troubled sea of ecumenicity?! And why would I — or Dr. Praamsma — have tried to submerge the clear and simple question — compromise or conflict? — beneath the waves which engulf the subject of the unity of the Church, waves which flow from the printing presses without end?

No, nothing is ever gained by blurring one problem into another, however related they may seem to be. The "topic in question" was (dare I say it once more) this only: when believers differ, is it necessarily either compromise or conflict between them? If Dr. Praamsma is *"analyzing" my article*, and *not* his own *preconception* of what a discussion of differences among believers should involve, he must perform that first task of analysis and let it disclose for him, and for his readers, what the "topic in question" really *is*.

We both know, of course, that the way in which Christians entertain their differences has *implications* for the far broader problems of ecumenicity. And Calvin has much to say on the unity of the Church. But if ever I should attempt to draw my notes from Calvin on that subject into an article, it will appear under an appropriate title, and the central theme will be clear enough, I hope, for all to see. It could be shown, incidentally, I think, that what Dr. Praamsma describes in his book as the mind of Calvin on Ecumenicity is hardly an adequate or accurate exposition of the subject. But this is for another day.

Meanwhile, let me answer Dr. Praamsma's question directly. Why didn't I quote from the treatise Dr. Praamsma mentions? Not, first of all, because I lack the qualifications of "any good church historian," though of course I do. But, quite simply, because that treatise opens a far wider perspective than my article was concerned with; a fact which, had Dr. Praamsma begun his "analysis" with a summary of my piece, would have been quite evident to him.

Summary

Dr. Praamsma pursues his interpretation of the "topic in question" by summing up, I think, his whole criticism as follows: "Calvin was a man of unity on a sound basis. But, John Calvin was not a man of unionism at all costs. I am impressed that br. DeKoster did not always make this distinction. That is why I feel compelled to write under this title."

The reader who has given any time at all to a perusal of my September article may well be amazed at this indictment. Does Dr. Praamsma really believe that any of my quotations from Calvin was intended to support the conclusion that Calvin *was* "a man of unionism at all costs"? Can he quote a line or even a word which makes so preposterous an assertion? Who believes that Calvin, of all men, was a peace-at-any-price kind of man? Or who would make himself so ridiculous as to search Calvin's books for quotations to prove it?

Of course not! Not his bitterest enemy dared say he was. And if indeed I had said so, and Dr. Praamsma could quote to me the words in which this awful charge were made, I should in shame and chagrin repudiate them at once. But Dr. Praamsma cannot quote such words from my article, nor from anything else I have written. And I will do more than pay Calvin the faint praise of saying that he was "not a man of unionism at all costs"; I will quote what I did say in my article about Calvin in this regard, which is, I think, far stronger than anything Dr. Praamsma himself says! I wrote: "He [Calvin] was passionately concerned with purity of doctrine, no compromiser was he. . . ." And, again, from my article: "Nay, the figure of Calvin which looms across the years is not one of fawning and mewing servility, ready to purchase harmony at the expense of his convictions . . . . He could pray and strive for unity with all who bore the marks of the church . . . not at the surrender of his convictions, but just exactly because he had his convictions!"

But, says Dr. Praamsma, "br. DeKoster did not always make this distinction."

I would not know what "always" means to Dr. Praamsma. I can find, however, in the relatively brief compass of the six pages my September article covers, not only the two quotations from it which I have just given, but a total of *fourteen* clear, distinct, and *separate times* when I stressed in simple words that *unity need not be purchased* at the *expense of convictions!* It is, in fact, the whole tenor of my article to show that *unity does not require compromise!* Indeed, Dr. Praamsma quotes from my article, as I have noted above, a sentence which says that whatever our differences *"remain,"* we may yet be drawn closer together.

I will not quote myself fourteen times here just because Dr. Praamsma misread me the first time; but I will give a sample, keeping the numbers as if I were giving all fourteen, and Dr. Praamsma can, if he cares to, fill in the gaps for himself. These quotations are word for word from my September article, and they will suggest that if I did not "always" insist that "unionism" does *not* de-

mand the *sale* of convictions, at least I said it now and then:

1. "But Paul and Calvin mean . . . that unity may be achieved though the difference remains."

3. "Thus the underlying *unity* may exhibit real theological *differences,* and yet both unity and difference are genuine."

6. "Genuine spiritual unity among the children of God can and does occur, not only in despite of theological differences, but on a more challenging level also because of them."

10. "He [Calvin] was passionately . . . [as quoted above]; and, too, he was passionately concerned to forward unity among true believers, no patron of bitterness was he . . . He *unites differences* in the manner I have discussed above; by finding *unity in difference,* so long as faith is present."

14. "Let us follow the steps again: let differences be a spur, not to division but to unity; . . . not at the surrender of tenets and sincerity, but because of them; not in our own strength, but in the serenity of faith."

How much more plainly, or more often, need it be said that we must not sell our differences to buy our unity? I urged precisely the opposite of "unionism at all costs"! And yet Dr. Praamsma formulates this amazing indictment not this once, but often. I ignore, he says later, "Calvin's conviction that unity ought not to be bought at any price." And again, 'Brother DeKoster interprets this quotation to mean that Calvin would prefer unity above anything." I find no word — and Dr. Praamsma quotes none — in my article which gives this charge an iota of credibility. And again: "Surely, it is out of place here from to conclude that Calvin wishes to say here that unity is to be preferred above all differences. That is crystal clear."

What may be "crystal clear" about this phase of Dr. Praamsma's "analysis" I can best leave to the reader to decide.

Part Two

We can now discuss briefly Dr. Praamsma's criticism of five out of the thirteen quotations from Calvin in my September article. Dr. Praamsma limits himself to these, he says, because he "should not overdo a good thing."

He begins: ". . . it was my contention that the choice and interpretation of his quotations were misplaced. I herewith go into details to confirm what I then stated."

Unless I misread the rest of Dr. Praamsma's articles, he is here once again inaccurate, because his "details" do not, in fact, deal with my "choice" of quotations at all. With this charge we have been finished since the first brief paragraph in which it was made; and no "details" are forthcoming to "confirm" its authenticity.

As to my "interpretation" of Calvin, you will probably surmise that Dr. Praamsma's "details" really demonstrate that he continues to misunderstand me. He insists that I must have been quoting Calvin to show that Calvin was "a man of unionism at all costs." By so misunderstanding me, Dr. Praamsma is led to asserting that I misinterpret Calvin.

I can hardly risk the tedium of following Dr. Praamsma every step of the way "into details." I shall rather try briefly to suggest what I did intend by the disputed quotations from Calvin, and answer the gist of Dr. Praamsma's criticism.

Before doing so, let me re-emphasize Calvin's teaching us, by precept and by example, that even doctrinal differences among Christians need not result in compromise nor in bitterness. He taught us further that such differences among believers can become steppingstones to "brotherly love and communion." So he said, and so he acted.

But we know that this same Calvin praised "harmony of views" as "the beginning of [mutual] love" (Phil. 2:2), and advocated "one consent" in the "truth of God" as the source of "peace and agreement" (Col. 2:2). We know that Calvin was, moreover, the enemy of doctrinal relativism: "It is certain that, as there is but one God, so there is but one truth of this God" (Acts 15:1).

How then can doctrinal differences ever lead to communion? Perhaps this question is implicitly Dr. Praamsma's, and perhaps yours also. You agree with Dr. Praamsma when he writes that Calvin "drew the line between things tolerable and things intolerable." So do I agree, though I think Dr. Praamsma would have favored his readers more if he had developed this generalization by going on to show where and between what doctrines Calvin drew this line.

How shall we, however, understand Calvin on this matter?

We can begin by noting that in various places and in various ways Calvin defines the "sum" or the "heart" of the Gospel. He means that "fellow believers" hold these doctrines in common, for that is what "Christian" *means.* To deny these fundamental "truths" is not to differ with a "brother" but it is to deny "Christian brotherhood" altogether. It is not the province of this article to attempt a "harmony" of Calvin's views on "fundamentals"; but we must recognize the basic fact that all "believers" *as believers* share certain "beliefs" together. And, viewing his task in life as that of a teacher, Calvin strove to bring all "brethren" into ever greater harmony of doctrine. It was for this, and not just to be contentious, that he time and again faced his "brethren" with his judgment of their errors.

But he acknowledged early in life that God gave to each of His own children less than perfect in-

sight into His one Truth. And in this light Calvin recognized a very wide range of doctrinal differences with Bucer, Melancthon, Bullinger, Luther and many other "brethren." And he found these differences no bar to communion with them.

How was this possible?

It is certain that Calvin did not so much as think of "selling" or "betraying" or "watering down" sound doctrine, as God gave him to understand it, in his relations with fellow believers. He never even thought of "sacrificing" truth in order to buy "unity."

And when you think of it, you realize that neither Calvin nor we *could* "sacrifice" truth to "buy" unity. It were egregious pride to suppose that *we* have "truth" to *sell*, or "unity" to *buy!* We do not possess truth. Truth possesses us, insofar as we share in it. We cannot, therefore, "sell" truth; we can sell only our allegiance, or obedience, to the truth.

What Calvin recognized, it seems to me, in Melancthon and the other brethren was the same *allegiance* to God's revelation as that which he strove to keep pure in himself. Therefore his doctrinal differences with these "holy and pious" men drew again and again from Calvin great sighs of anguish. His brethren were, or sought to be, just as *obedient* to God's word as Calvin strove to be. Yet they differed. And out of the pain of these differences Calvin drew — God gave — blessing! It was this: even their doctrinal differences *drew* Calvin and his brethren *together*. How?

Because these very differences *testified to* the same willing passion among them all to render *obedient homage* to God and to His revelation. And, therefore, any compromise in the expression of their differences would not have brought them closer together, but would rather have been open testimony to a disloyalty to revelation which would have driven them apart. So we may understand why Calvin never supposed that any doctrinal compromise could engender true communion. So we may also understand why unity is possible among believers even *because* of doctrinal difference.

For unity lies "deeper" than doctrinal difference. To borrow the terminology of Professor H. Dooyeweerd — the unity among believers lies at the level of the "heart," while differences lie at the level of the "temporal horizon." Unity, says Calvin, is brought about "by Christ alone" (Eph. 1:10). Or, as Dr. Dooyeweerd expresses the same thing: believers are "gripped" by God and ingrafted into the Body of Christ. As Christ is the head, and true believers are the body, so are we all *united*, "will we nil we." We do not *achieve* this unity, though we often speak that way for convenience' sake or when we mean, not *unity* but *agreement* or *unanimity*. But in reality we simply *discover* our unity in Christ and try to define in life what it means; or we wilfully blind ourselves to it and ignore its meaning.

And as this unity is spiritual its enemies are spiritual. Calvin names them: ambition, pride, envy, malignity. When these creep into doctrinal differences, *then* such differences become threats to communion.

What we may learn from so quick and tentative a survey is this: among those children of God whose first loyalty is to His revelation, doctrinal differences on significant issues can testify of and lead to a unity of spirit just to the extent that spiritual sins are banished.

I proffer these remarks as some response to what I take to be Dr. Praamsma's real problem with my September article. I would not want them to obscure the thrust of that article, which is simply that Calvin teaches that neither compromise nor bitterness need flow from doctrinal difference among believers.

Let us turn now to Dr. Praamsma's specific criticisms.

The First Quotation

To support my contention that doctrinal differences among believers can lead to mutual communion, I quoted from Calvin's Preface to *Romans*, where he says that God never designed that each of us should have perfect "understanding on every point." Why not? Calvin replies: "To keep up and maintain the desire and exercise of brotherly love and communion."

Dr. Praamsma cannot, and does not, deny the plain fact that Calvin does teach here what I quoted him to maintain, namely, that differences can lead to communion. But, Dr. Praamsma argues, Calvin did not mean "doctrinal differences." Calvin, says Dr. Praamsma, "was only speaking about differences in the understanding of certain Scriptural texts."

If, in fact, Calvin meant "texts" and not "doctrines," how did he explain his own unity-in-*doctrinal*-difference with Melancthon? This question Dr. Praamsma neither raises nor answers. Nor does this really matter because in his own next paragraph Dr. Praamsma finds himself saying this: "Calvin sought to distinguish between points of necessary agreement of doctrine, and between points of permitted difference." So Dr. Praamsma, too, agrees that Calvin did recognize *differences on doctrinal issues*, as well as on "certain texts."

Dr. Praamsma's assertion that Calvin distinguished between "necessary agreement" and "permitted difference" was never in dispute between us. It would be interesting, as suggested before, if Dr. Praamsma had drafted a list of those doctrines which, according to Calvin, belonged to each category.

Of course, I repeat, there must be agreement on "necessary" doctrines, or we could not speak of "fellow believers." But my quotation from Calvin demonstrated *how* believers should view their differences, not *what* these differences should be. And I will stand on my contention that Calvin taught, and Calvin lived, the truth that among fellow Christians *doctrinal* differences can lead to "brotherly love and communion."

The Second

In a letter to Bucer, as we know, Calvin condemns Bucer's Commentary on the *Psalms*. But Calvin ends by saluting and embracing this same erring Bucer. This I called a "moving testimony to Calvin's conviction that unity transcends grave difference. . . ."

Dr. Praamsma does not think so. He quotes from the same letter. Calvin is also censoring Bucer's tendency to "treat all things smoothly" to the extent of compromising his own convictions. Bucer, says Dr. Praamsma, compromised too much; and Calvin told him so!

And then Dr. Praamsma allows himself a verbal flourish: "I repeat, brothers and sisters. If Dr. DeKoster thinks that this letter of Calvin is moving testimony of Calvin's conviction that unity transcends grave difference of opinion, then his eyes and my eyes don't read the same things from the same letter."

Dr. Praamsma is looking in the wrong direction. He sees only what Calvin denounces — compromise. He fails to see Calvin and Bucer embracing each other.

Let him look again:

I named *one* fault Calvin found with Bucer. Along comes Dr. Praamsma and names a *second* We both might have named *several* more! But the longer we make the list of differences between Calvin and Bucer, the more astonishing it is that Calvin found them steps to "brotherly love and communion" with Bucer. Doesn't Dr. Praamsma really see this?

Perhaps he might ask himself: Why did Calvin declare himself so close to, and so admiring of, this "compromiser"? Why didn't Calvin tell Bucer in this very same letter that he, Calvin, could not "sell" the "truth" for unity, and so, until Bucer recanted his views, no union was possible between them? Is not this what Dr. Praamsma would have been tempted to say, were he in Calvin's place? And, if so, how does Dr. Praamsma explain this difference between himself and this John Calvin whose integrity Dr. Praamsma thinks he is here defending.

When Dr. Praamsma has thought on these questions, if he has not already done so, he will perhaps understand why I still call Calvin's letter a "moving testimony" to unity-in-difference.

The Third

Calvin tells us that, "No one will ever be a good teacher, who does not show himself to be teachable, as no one will ever be found who has, in himself alone, such an overflowing in respect of perfection of doctrine, as not to derive benefit from listening to others . . . ."

This is the same instruction as he gives us in the first quotation, from Romans: that we must use *doctrinal* differences for mutual communion.

Dr. Praamsma cannot insist in this case that Calvin means only differences in the interpretation of "certain texts," because Calvin himself says "perfection of doctrine." But Dr. Praamsma can insist again that, as he puts it: "John Calvin did not accept all kinds of differences."

Inasmuch as I never dreamed of maintaining that Calvin did "accept all kinds of differences," I could hardly have understood this quotation from Calvin to show that he did.

Calvin simply says this: if we would teach others, we must in turn listen carefully to what they would teach us. A happier picture of what does, and God willing, shall ever continue to transpire at Gindiri is hard to imagine. All teach; all listen; joined together by one Lord, and seeking together for greater clarity, purer understanding.

The Fourth

Dr. Praamsma skips over two further quotations from Calvin which teach the same doctrine: that difference can lead to unity. He pauses at my quotation from Calvin to du Tillet.

My argument was that if we cannot, in good conscience, deny the term "brethren" to those who call us to Gindiri as they called us first to Nigeria, then we must remember the warning Calvin penned to du Tillet: ". . . for I perceive how many begin to flatter themselves under the title of The Church, strongly condemning whatsoever is not like their own, for which they will have to render account."

Writes Dr. Praamsma: "Lo and behold, br. DeKoster herewith concludes that we cannot deny the term 'brethren' to those who seek our aid and leadership. He has in mind, of course, the 'brethren' in Nigeria, with whom the 1958 John Calvin would surely have set up a theological school, I presume. Pardon me, but I do not read anything of the kind in Calvin here."

It is easy for me to pardon Dr. Praamsma, for I, too, did not "read anything of the kind in Calvin here."

My point was, I think, more plain than Dr. Praamsma seems to have found it. I shall summarize it: We received a call in 1939. We tested its "spirit" and judged it to be of God. We responded by sending men to work under the Sudan United Mission. In due season that Mission decided

to establish a theological school. We were called to join, and then to direct, that school. We responded to that call, too. Now voices arise among us questioning that decision. There is talk of "compromise or bitterness," talk of "betraying" our faith, of "watering down" our principles or our witness. And so, in the words of Calvin, we are justly reminded that we must take heed not to flatter ourselves as "The Church, strongly condemning whatsoever is not like [our] own." Why take heed? Because for this, too, we "will have to render account."

This is what Calvin said. Dr. Praamsma is hardly a responsible critic when he asserts that I used this quotation to try to make Calvin say that "we cannot deny the term 'brethren' to those who seek our aid and leadership." That I did not do. Nor did I interpret Calvin to say in this quotation that those in the TCNN are our "brethren," though I believe they are; and, since 1939, Synod has also demonstrated its belief that "brethren" they are. If Dr. Praamsma thinks otherwise, he should adduce his evidence and all can seek to profit by it.

But the warning remains: we shall have to render account for our decisions regarding the TCNN: and we may not base such decisions upon the assumption that we alone are "The Church . . . ." How often, and how strongly, Calvin says this, Dr. Praamsma knows well enough.

The Fifth

After skipping over my quotations illustrating Calvin's relations with Melancthon, Dr. Praamsma lights upon a brief quotation from a letter written by Calvin to a dissident Genevan minister, Caroli. Calvin says, in the part I quoted: ". . . if indeed any honest cause could ever be advanced for disturbing the peace of the Church."

Replies Dr. Praamsma: "Br. DeKoster interprets this quotation to mean that Calvin would prefer unity above anything."

The inherent absurdity of this wild charge I need hardly pause to demonstrate once more.

Conclusion

Calvin's passion for unity among fellow believers could be illustrated almost without end. He was stung more deeply, therefore, by the charge that he "rent the Body of Christ" than by any other attack. Cardinal Sadolet voiced that charge, of course; as did others.

Sadolet had (what is in this context) a very interesting test of "heresy." Heresy was, Sadolet said, "difference of opinion." Any difference in doctrinal views was proof, therefore, of disunity.

Calvin denied this. And in this denial he lived. Difference does not destroy unity, if difference is clearly voiced (in love and held in love) among those who belong to the Lord. Calvin put it this way, in commenting on Galatians 1:2: "Yet our acknowledgement of societies to be churches of Christ must be accompanied by an explicit condemnation of everything in them that is improper or defective. . . ."

So it was for Calvin. So it can be for us. We acknowledge fellow believers as sharing the same Body with ourselves, but we make no compromise of the differences between us. For compromise is the enemy of spiritual unity.

And we remember, as Calvin did, that this view of unity-in-difference runs two ways. Calvin "took" as much as he "gave" of "explicit condemnation." And he taught us that if we want others to learn from our "explicit condemnation" of them, so we must be prepared to learn from their "explicit condemnation" of us.

We may, in this spirit, say to each other and to all those at Gindiri, what Calvin said four hundred years ago to Bullinger:

"We are anxious to come to a friendly understanding with you . . . . That which we wish is to speak with you in a friendly way on the subject about which we so little agree. This is the best mode among brethren, and, if I do not greatly err, that which we should find the most profitable."

And so, I trust, will Dr. Praamsma and I find it to have been mutually "profitable" to speak plainly to each other; for we, too, can thus find unity-in-difference, remembering as we do that differences among brethren need not lead to compromise, no, nor to bitterness!

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The Righteousness of God

by James Daane

IN AN ARTICLE entitled *The Perfection of God* (December, 1958), it was asserted that the perfection of God of which Matthew 5 speaks is that righteousness of God which is His grace toward (even) evil and unjust men. The correctness of this is apparent from the fact that they who enter the kingdom of heaven must have a righteousness which *exceeds* that of scribe and Pharisee, publican and heathen Gentile. The righteousness which exceeds, and which constitutes them children of their Father in heaven, is a righteousness which loves the enemy, blesses the curser, and prays for the persecutor. They who do these things are perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect, for the perfect righteousness of God is revealed in His gracious action toward evil and unjust men. The righteousness of God defined in Matthew 5 is, therefore, His grace.

This reading of Matthew 5 may seem strange to some, especially to my ministerial colleagues who have, as have I myself, learned their theology from the *Systematic Theology* of the late Professor Berkhof.

IN HIS TREATMENT of the communicable attributes of God (pp. 74-76), Berkhof defines the righteousness of God as though it were identical with God's justice. He asserts that the "fundamental idea of righteousness is that of strict adherence to the law." By "strict adherence to law" Berkhof does not mean fulfilling the love-demand of the law; he means rather the administration of punishment upon those who have not loved. This is apparent from the fact that he then proceeds to define righteousness further by making the distinction between absolute and relative justice. Absolute justice is said to be that quality of God's nature by which He is infinitely righteous in Himself, and relative justice — by which Berkhof means justice as it relates to man — is defined as God's maintenance of His holiness against every violation of His holiness by sinful human actions. He then asserts that the term justice applies particularly to the latter, and he defines justice as that divine action by which God gives to "every man his due," and treats every man "according to his deserts." He concludes his explication of God's righteousness by distinguishing between various kinds of justice: (1) rectoral justice, (2) distributive justice, (3) remunerative justice, (4) retributive justice.

In this treatment of God's righteousness as it relates to man, it is plain that the righteousness of God is simply identical with justice. Indeed, in Berkhof's treatment, the justice of God receives no special treatment at all. It receives treatment only in his discussion of righteousness. There is no objection to treating the justice of God under the category of righteousness, but Berkhof's identification of righteousness with justice is another matter. In Biblical thought the righteousness of God is just, but it is more than justice. The Biblical teaching of a righteousness of God which is His grace toward sinners, as it confronts us for example in Matthew 5, may indeed sound strange to those who have been led under the influence of Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* simply to identify righteousness with justice.

In support of his treatment of God's righteousness as mere justice, Berkhof refers to Romans 2:6, which, it will be observed, speaks of the righteous *judgment* of God, and to Romans 1:32, which, it will be observed, speaks of those who are the objects of God's wrath, being worthy of death. But — and this would seem quite significant in this connection — Berkhof does not refer to that text which announces the theme of the whole epistle to the Romans, namely, Romans 1:16, 17. In this passage Paul declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God unto salvation, and then accounts for the power of the gospel by declaring "for therein is revealed the righteousness of God." Here righteousness is obviously not identical with mere justice, for here we are confronted with a righteousness which is a *power unto salvation.* Justice does not save, for justice, as Berkhof rightly defines it, simply gives to every man his due, and treats every man according to his deserts. The righteousness of God therefore which is revealed in the gospel (according to Romans 1:17) is more than justice. It is more than justice because it includes the idea of *grace.*

Later in his Roman epistle (Chap. 3) Paul further describes the righteousness of God as a righteousness which is "apart from the law." This to be sure does not mean that God's righteousness is against the law, for Paul explicitly asserts that it does not make the law of non-effect, but rather establishes the law. But while the righteousness of God establishes the law, it does so by going beyond the law. This is apparent from the fact that it *justifies.* But a righteousness which

justifies the ungodly, is more than mere justice. Justice does not justify the sinner; on the contrary, it condemns him. This is the function of mere law as it relates to the sinner: to stop every mouth and to bring all the world under the judgment of God. The righteousness of God, therefore, which justifies the ungodly is not adequately defined as something whose "fundamental idea is that of strict adherence to the law." The righteousness of God which empowers the gospel to save, includes justice, for it establishes the law, but it goes beyond law because it freely (graciously) justifies the sinner. A righteousness which saves the sinner and justifies the ungodly is a righteousness which contains the idea of grace.

How, we may ask, can God be *just* and yet justify the ungodly? The answer is not found in mere justice. The answer lies rather in God's righteousness. By virtue of the divine righteousness revealed in the gospel, God can be and is, both "just and the justifier of him who hath faith in Jesus." The concept of God's righteousness in Paul's description of the gospel is not mere justice, not a strict adherence to law: a granting to "every man his due," and to each man "according to his deserts."

LET US VIEW the same matter from another viewpoint. If, as Berkhof says, the fundamental idea of God's righteousness is strict adherence to law, then the fundamental idea of law is righteousness in the sense of mere justice, which is to say, righteousness without grace. Yet when Jesus summarizes the law, He does not summarize it in terms of a righteousness which is mere justice. On the contrary, He summarizes the righteousness demanded by the law in terms of *love*. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. To be righteous, to be in the right, one must not merely be just, one must love. The righteousness which God demands in the law surely includes justice, but goes beyond justice, as is evident by its demand of love. Love is of the essence of righteousness. And further, the righteousness of the law only takes the form of mere justice when the essential and fundamental demand of law, namely, love, is not met. When love is wanting, righteousness may take the form of mere justice, as for example, in our civil courts, and in those instances where God executes His righteous judgments. The civil courts are right when they deal in terms of justice with certain loveless actions of men. This is the righteousness of mere justice. And God is right when and where He pleases to use that righteousness of law which is mere justice to punish the sinner. But God is also right when by virtue of "his own righteousness," which is "apart from the law," He is not only just, but also gracious, and *justifies* the ungodly.

FINALLY, let us look at the matter from another viewpoint. The righteousness of God is revealed in Jesus. God made Jesus to be righteousness for us. What is the righteousness of Jesus? The righteousness (or sinlessness) of Jesus is not adequately indicated by the statement that He fulfilled and did not violate any of the Ten Commandments. Jesus indeed fulfilled the law. Without this He could not have saved sinners. But merely fulfilling the law of the Ten Commandments does not constitute salvation. To save, Christ had to die. As Paul says, "for if there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law." Since the mere keeping of the law could not save, Christ had to die. Over and beyond the will of God expressed in the law, was that will of God for Christ that He die on the cross to take away the sin of the world. The righteousness of Christ, therefore, includes God's love and grace for sinners. And this righteousness of Christ which is the revelation of the righteousness of God as it relates to sinners (Berkhof's "relative justice"), is not one whose fundamental idea is strict adherence to law, a mere justice which gives to every man his due. The most distinctive characteristic of the righteousness of God revealed in Christ is that while it includes and does not violate justice, it goes beyond justice in that it is gracious. It has grace rather than justice for the sinner. God sent His Son into the world, not to condemn the world — mere divine justice could have done that — but to save the world, and this gracious character of God's righteousness is its most distinctive feature. If anything, the fundamental idea of God's righteousness is the precise opposite of Berkhof's contention. The fundamental — I would prefer the term "distinctive" — idea of God's righteousness revealed in the gospel, a divine righteousness which empowers the gospel to save, justifies the ungodly, accounts for the fact that in saving sinners God is not only just but the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus — this distinctive idea is *not* a "strict adherence to law," but a freedom to go beyond law, a freedom to be gracious to sinners.

This freedom of God to be gracious to sinners is precisely an expression of the terms "divine sovereignty" and "sovereign grace." Where the righteousness of God is defined simply as justice, there the sovereign freedom of God to be gracious to sinners is imperiled. When Berkhof describes the righteousness of God as relative justice (*ab extra*, i.e., as it relates to man) and defines it as *"that perfection of God by which He maintains Himself over against every violation of His holi-*

ness, and shows in every respect that He is the Holy One," he commits himself to a definition of divine righteousness which is identical with justice. If this were an adequate, Biblical definition of God's righteousness, then the righteousness of God could not save, for it would lack the sovereign freedom of God to be gracious to sinners. Righteousness, as Berkhof defines it, cannot be the power of God unto salvation.

IT IS PRECISELY this loss of the free sovereignty of God to be gracious to sinners which we meet in the theology of Herman Hoeksema. It is a curious thing indeed to read very explicit denials of divine sovereignty in a theology which so consciously carries the banner of the sovereignty of God. Hoeksema, as does Berkhof, defines the righteousness of God as though it were identical with justice. This appears in Hoeksema's rejections of common grace. He urged that it was "impossible," that God "cannot" have any love or grace for a sinner, and the "impossibility" was said to stem from the holiness and the righteousness of God. God, Hoeksema declared, would not be righteous but would indeed contradict His holiness if He extended love and grace to a sinner. As holy and righteous, God can only hate the sinner.

The same understanding of God's righteousness accounts for Hoeksema's understanding of the love and grace of God which He extends to the elect. God can only love the elect because they are (in Christ) righteous; because the elect are righteous, God can love them without violating His holiness. But here righteousness appears as mere justice. God loves those who love Him. But a righteousness which is mere justice does not exceed the righteousness of scribes and Pharisee, publican and heathen Gentile, for their righteousness too is mere justice: an eye for an eye, love for those who love them. The point to be observed is that a righteousness defined as mere justice is not that righteousness of God which is the *power* unto salvation, is not that which allows God to exercise His freedom of grace towards sinners.

It was just because Berkhof, no less than Hoeksema, defined the righteousness of God as a mere justice which maintains the holiness of God against every violation of it, as that which gives to "every man his due," that Berkhof felt the force of Hoeksema's objection that there can be no judicial basis for a common-grace favor of God for a reprobate. On the basis of their common definition of righteousness, Hoeksema had the better part of the argument. This is apparent from Berkhof's answer. He says that since common grace does not save anyway, there is perhaps no need for a judicial basis for common grace (pp. 437, 438). This is not only unconvincing but an answer which violates Berkhof's own definition of righteousness, namely, as that justice of God which gives to "every man his due" and which treats "him according to his deserts." By his insistence upon the truth of common grace, Berkhof retains the idea that God in His grace is free and sovereign, but he does so only by violating his own definition of the righteousness of God.

TO THOSE, then, who have been influenced by Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* to think of the righteousness of God as identical with justice, it may seem strange that the righteousness of God in Matthew 5 is to be understood in terms of God's grace toward sinners. Yet in view of the general Biblical teaching concerning the righteousness of God, it need not, indeed ought not, seem strange.

Let us then return to Matthew 5. Let us begin by asking what kind of righteousness does one need to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus tells us that the righteousness of the scribe and Pharisee is not sufficient for entrance. What kind of righteousness did they have? The righteousness to which they subscribed was at best justice. They believed in an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. What is this but justice? They believed what they had been taught by their fathers and what they had inherited by their tradition (a dangerous practice when done uncritically!) Against this Jesus announced: But I say unto you! Go the second mile, give your cloak also, love your enemies. A righteousness which is mere justice is not enough. The righteousness of those who enter the kingdom must exceed, must go beyond this.

Nor is the righteousness of publican and heathen Gentile enough. The children of the Father in heaven must do more than these. What do these do? They greet those who greet them, love those that love them, accept those who accept them. This is a kind of righteousness — even as the scribe and Pharisee have a kind of righteousness. It is righteousness again in terms of mere justice. It reciprocates. It gives in kind. And this is justice: greeting for greeting, eye for eye. The righteousness of scribe and Pharisee, and of heathen Gentile, does not differ in kind. Therefore in the concluding verses Jesus groups together the publican (a Jew) and the Gentile (a heathen). Both have a kind of righteousness, a righteousness which is mere justice, that which is a strict adherence to law: a tooth for a tooth, a greeting for a greeting, a giving to every man his mere due. But the righteousness of the children of the Father in heaven must do more, and exceed this. How? By being perfect as God is perfect. By possessing and practicing the righteousness of God. What is God's perfect righteousness? It is that righteousness which exceeds and does more than mere justice, a righteousness which is the love and grace of God toward sinners, a love and grace which God reveals

when He sends rain and sunshine on the just and the unjust, upon the evil as well as upon the good. It is that righteousness which informs the conduct of God's children when they go beyond mere justice, and love their enemies, bless the curser, and pray (not about) but *for* the persecutor. The distinctive mark of the child of God — that which separates him from the ungodly Jew and heathen Gentile — and the distinctive mark of the righteousness of God, is that righteousness which is more than justice, which has grace as its first and fundamental idea, a righteousness which does *not* adhere strictly to law, and which does *not* give to each man his due and to every man his desert.

LET US NOT so define the righteousness of God that we deprive God of the right to save sinners. Let us not deny the Lord the freedom and sovereign right to exercise His grace. For if the righteousness of God is identical with justice, and righteousness is "strict adherence to the law," then God would not be right if He did anything more than give to each man his due, and to every man his desert. But the righteousness of God, according to the Bible, is that which is just but goes beyond and exceeds mere justice; it is that grace of God which is an expression of His sovereignty and which enables God to be just *and also* the justifier of the ungodly. It is a righteousness by which God is still in the right when He has love and grace for *sinners*. This is God's perfection, a perfection which is also in men when they go beyond mere justice and love the enemy, pray for the persecutor.

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The Roots of the Calvinistic Day School Movement (IV)

by Donald Oppewal

IN PREVIOUS ISSUES of the *Journal* I have pointed out that the Calvinistic school system of today cannot be rightly understood except in terms of its unique religious and intellectual tradition. I have attempted to give a brief sketch of each of the major influences that have played upon and affected the school system. I have suggested that it has its roots in an intellectual tradition, namely Calvinism (Sept., 1958), a cultural tradition, namely, that of the Netherlands (Sept., 1958), an ecclesiastical tradition, namely, the Christian Reformed Church (Nov., 1958), and a religious tradition, namely, the Bible (Dec., 1958). It is important to remember that these traditions have not operated independently of each other, but have interacted with each other and blended their influences on the school. While the most underlying and all-pervasive influence on its theory has probably been that of Calvinism, this has been filtered through other traditions and movements, producing a system built on a composite of both complementary and conflicting foundations.

In these articles the emphasis has been placed upon the conflicts and confusions in the theoretical undergirding of the school. The reasons for this emphasis are twofold. One reason is that space forbids a treatment of all facets of the educational thought of this school; one must always be selective in discussing any movement such as this. The other, and more important, reason is that it is the confusions and conflicts in the realm of theory that keep the school from being as effective, and from being as strong a witness, as it could be. It is this area that now calls for the closest attention of parents and educators if the school is to grow and mature.

A discussion of the theoretical foundations of this school movement would not be complete without some attention to still another influence in the life and thought of the school. In this concluding article I turn to a consideration of

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY: ITS NEW ROOTS

The Calvinistic school system in America has now existed as a parentally controlled educational system for over a century. It was begun and maintained by people who were essentially immigrants, newcomers to America with its democratic social patterns. The first generation of supporters of this school resisted Americanization and looked to the Netherlands for guidance and leadership in education. Since then, the Netherlands influence has inevitably waned and has been lost on the second and third generation now supporting the school system. This shriveling of one of the roots of the school system naturally would cause some uneasiness and lack of direction. However, even the most

nostaligic have realized that here in America there are relationships existing between the church and state, and the state and the school, that do not exist in the Netherlands. This realization of cultural differences has caused the school systems of the two countries to drift apart, and there is now very little interchange of ideas between the two.

This shriveling of one root was temporarily compensated for by a strengthening of another root: the one reaching into the Christian Reformed Church. For many years the school drew — to some extent it still draws — on the church for its theoretical justification. In a previous article we have suggested that there were forces that prevented this root from becoming permanently attached to the school system.

The weakening of these two influences on the theory of the school naturally produced a feeling for the need of new roots, roots that were suitable for the climate and situation here in America. Even in the early days of the movement there was a realization that the Calvinistic school needed to adapt itself to the American social and educational scene if it was to survive. A convention speaker of over thirty years ago put it well in these words:

> Our schools must become thoroughly American. Unless we strip our schools of that which smacks of foreign soil, our schools will have no appeal for the rising American generations. To interest Americans our schools must be American. The schools must be organized along American lines; its work must be conducted in the American spirit; its methods must be those of America (NUCS *Yearbook*, 1923-24, p. 152).

This early expression — others could be cited — shows that the desire for cultural relevance was sincere and deeply seated. The leaders and educators, if not all of the people, wanted the schools to be busy striking roots in America.

The Age of Indifference

After the initial concern for the strengthening of roots in American soil, there is a strange silence on this matter in the literature. For almost two decades (roughly 1925-45) there was little talk about cultural relevance. There was little concern and discussion about what the school must do in American democracy that it had not done in the Netherlands. While the public school literature of this period is full of discussions of the implications for education of democracy and the democratic spirit, the Calvinistic school seems not to have been much concerned about these theoretical matters.

If space permitted one might speculate about the causes for this indifference to cultural relevance. One might speculate about the extent to which parochialism, or fear of worldliness, or the immigrant spirit, or concern with the more practical matters of building and staffing schools were the chief reasons for this lack of concern. An adequate defense of any of these judgments about why there was no attempt in these years to build a philosophy of education oriented to the American social scene would call for analysis and documentation that would go beyond the scope of this article.

Without offering the evidence to support the judgment, I would say that the initial enthusiasm for relating the school to American democracy was tempered by the realization that loss of distinctiveness is often the price paid for cultural adaptation. There was a fear that the distinctiveness of the school system would be swallowed up in the process. There was a realization that whereas there was danger in isolationism and separatism, there was also danger in cultural absorption. The leaders realized that time and acclimatization have a way of emptying content from old slogans and passwords; they knew that the intellectual vacuum thus created was perfect for the unwitting absoption into the school of values antithetical to those in the school's tradition. For these reasons the school's roots in American democracy grew not at all for twenty years, and even now they are small and growth is tentative.

It is important to note that this slowness in adjusting to a new cultural context is not due to absence in the theory of the need for cultural relevance. While the separatistic theory behind the movement does favor a continued isolation of the student from cultural forces in American life, and therefore favors education that is purged of all opposing opinions and points of view, there is stronger and more powerful theory to support an education that is committed to a searching analysis of all points of view. This latter point of view is in evidence in much of the textbook program of the National Union. A textbook program undertaken by a small group who are protesting against the texts in common use in other schools might easily operate on the principle of exclusion; the textbooks could try to make a given subject area Christian by excluding from their pages all beliefs, arguments, evidence, or literature that do not support the views regarded as desirable. The representatives of the National Union have always insisted that the idea behind separate textbooks is not that of closing out from the student's mind everything with which the Calvinists do not agree. The idea is simply to provide criticism and analysis of those opposing views.[1] In the same vein a supporter of this school system argued that in order for the choice for Christianity on the part of the student to be meaningful, he must be thoroughly acquainted with the alternatives to Christianity as a way of life. The Christian school he regarded

1. See comments of Dr. John Van Bruggen, *Proceedings of Christian High School Principals' Conference of* 1949, p. 67, for an example.

as the proper place for the presentation of such alternatives.[2]

Even though there is some evidence that the theory behind the school movement opposes cultural separatism and withdrawal, there is not even today any body of literature which attempts to deal with the influence of democratic ideas on education. There is next to nothing in the way of a sociology of education for the Calvinistic school, even though the literature on this matter for the public school is voluminous. The distinctive role the Calvinistic school can play in American democracy, and what democratic values are consistent with the intellectual and religious tradition of this school: these are relatively unexplored areas and undeveloped roots.

The Age of Concern

Within the last decade the literature of the movement has contained signs of an increasing awareness that the school needs more roots, needs more theoretical foundation than it has had in the past. While need for cultural relevance is not prominent in this growing awareness, any assessment of theory should lead to an examination of the present cultural roots of the school. Recent active interest in theory is evident from the regularity with which calls for statements of philosophy of education have come from various sources.[3] This interest led the NUCS in 1950 to appoint a committee to produce a statement of a philosophy of education for the school system. Two different statements by Calvin College professors of education have since then been distributed by the National Union, but neither of them has thus far captured the attention and loyalties of the typical teacher or parent. Neither of them has been discussed to any extent in the literature, nor has the typical principal or teacher made much use of them in setting up or altering major educational policies in the schools.

The failure of these statements of the philosophy of education of the Calvinistic school is not due so much to any defect in the statements as it is due to a lack of underlying agreement in the system as to what is involved in making this school distinctive. An adequate statement of this kind can be made only when there is underlying community of belief and persuasion in terms of which the statement can be made. At this point, this unified outlook on Christian education is not so much a given to be set down in writing as it is a goal to be achieved.

There is some further evidence within the last decade that those within the school system are concerned about theory and about the distinctiveness of their school system. The publication of textbooks, class manuals, and curriculum guides by the National Union indicates that they see that their point of view needs concrete expression in terms of curriculum content and practices. They see their school as both related to and distinct from the public school and its cultural emphases and values. Discussion and evaluation of these publcations is carried on in both the *Christian Home and School* magazine and in various teachers' institutes and conventions. Such discussions give evidence of continuing and even increasing concern about the theory back of the Calvinistic school movement.

Serious attempts have also been made to use Biblical concepts in an appraisal of intellectual disciplines such as psychology and philosophy.[4] Although much needs to be done, there is a start toward recognizing the role of these disciplines in formulating theory for the Calvinistic school. In a recent editorial of the *Christian Home and School* (Jan. 1959) there is a statement of what role this school system can play in a democracy. This is a step in the direction of building a sociology of education, something almost completely lacking in the literature of this movement.

Such are the few but heartening signs that the school is coming of age, that it is looking to its foundations. It is just beginning to size up both itself and the culture in which it exists. If this activity and concern continues for the next decade, those years might well become the "Age of Cultural Relevance."

Summing Up

It has not been my intention in these articles to give the impression that the Calvinistic school movement is adrift or that it is without theoretical rootage. To say that the theoretical foundations of this school system are undergoing changes because of the shrinkage of old roots is not to say that there is not a constant element. There has been such a constant element which has given and can continue to give stability to the educational system. Both the Bible and the world and life view of Calvinism remain to guide the school in its development of new roots in a new culture and in new intellectual disciplines.

Although evidence could be given to show that in the present-day movement there are both forces which tend to encourage the development of new roots, and forces which tend to make the school cling to and strengthen old roots, such evidence would be simply repetitions of what has given in

2. See speech of Dr. W. H. Jellema at Principals' Conference of 1948, *Proceedings*, pp. 104ff.

3. See *Proceedings of Christian High School Principals' Conference*, 1948, pp. 129ff. See also H. Schultze, "Desperately Needed —— A Philosophy of Education," *Calvin Forum* June-July, 1950, p. 238.

4. See, for example *Basic Concepts in Christian Pedagogy* by Jan Waterink, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954; and also parts of *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, ed. by C. Jaarsma, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953.

previous articles. It should be sufficient to summarize here by repeating that an all-pervasive dual influence has played upon the school system since its birth in the Christian Reformed Church over a hundred years ago. This dual emphasis, stemming from two different interpretations of Calvinism, has blurred the outlines of the theory behind the system. This blurring of principles governing school policies has made the school susceptible to misunderstanding by those outside the system. On the one hand, it has often appeared to be the product of a narrow and exclusivistic sectarian and separatistic spirit, and thus identified with the lunatic fringe of Protestantism. The school is then regarded as being divisive in a culture that places a premium upon cooperation and cultural interaction. On the other hand, more serious investigation into the roots of the movement indicates that the school need not be this at all. The school system can be seen as a reflection of a religio-philosophical way of life which, far from being anticultural, is eager to influence society at large and to play an active role in the moulding of the socio-political system known as American democracy. Viewed from this perspective, this educational system could be called divisive only in the sense that every minority group which speaks with conviction on any issue prevents society from achieving complete uniformity of thought and opinion. It is only when democracy is equated with uniformity of thought that such a school could be considered to be divisive and undemocratic.

Given the former view of the school system, there is no desperate need for cultural roots, no real need for determining what democratic social and political theory has to say about educational theory and practice. In this view of the school its function is served best if it remains apart from the mainstream of American culture; if it isolates its children from both the temptations and ideas of present-day America. In the latter view of the school its cultural function is not to exist in isolation and separation from American society in general and American education in particular, but to give concrete expression to alternative views of the proper and adequate theoretical foundations for education in American democracy. This the school can do effectively only if it develops deeper roots in the culture which it wishes to influence.

The Calvinistic school system cannot be said to have really decided in which direction it wishes to go on this matter. Almost three decades ago the history and the future prospects of this school system were summed up in the following judgment and question:

> Our Christian school has reached a crisis in its history. As the movement ceases to be fed by forces hailing directly from across the seas, and as many a potent watchword of the past has lost its meaning and its power, the grave question which we face today is this: Whether we can resell the idea and ideal of specifically Christian education to our people, and especially to our younger generation that has become thoroughly Americanized. (NUCS *Yearbook*, 1929-30, p. 73)

That judgment still could be made today, and that question is as grave today as it was then.

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LETTER TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

Permit a brief reply to the article in *The Reformed Journal*, December 1958 issue, written by Rev. Elco Oostendorp under the caption, "The Genius of Reformed Church Polity."

Rev. Oostendorp states that he has been converted to the idea that the Christian Reformed Church is sorely in need of regional synods. The grounds for this conversion on the part of Rev. Oostendorp is not that our Church has been violating the genius of Reformed Church Polity, but he sees present trends and dangers which make the insertion of regional synods very necessary and even imperative. I regret to state that I have, at least for the present, been converted away from the idea of introducing regional synods as an added piece of ecclesiastical machinery.

I deem it regrettable that Rev. Oostendorp, chairman of the present study committee for regional synods, did not furnish the readers of *The Reformed Journal* a complete picture of what is expected to be achieved by the introduction of regional synods in our ecclesiastical church polity. Be that as it may, his contribution in the December issue of *The Reformed Journal* does call for comment and appraisal. To state that our Church delayed the introduction of regional synods in our ecclesiastical machinery because our churches were too few in number and that the time was not ripe for it is quite beside the point at issue. If a vital Reformed church polity principle is at stake pertaining to regional synods, the size of a denomination has nothing to do with its introduction. Rev. Oostendorp virtually refutes his own position in quoting from the "Kybernetiek" of the late Prof. W. Heyns, that only when the *profit* of the church demands the introduction of regional synods the time is ripe to call such an instrument of ecclesiastical church polity into existence between Classes and Synods. That is the point at stake. Does the *profit* of the Christian Reformed Church demand regional synods as a distinct and absolutely necessary part of our present ecclesiastical polity? The burden of proof lies with Rev. Oostendorp that real profit will come to our denomination through the use of regional synods, and that such regional synods have great practical value and a workability for the lesser and major assemblies of our church life.

I fail to see the potency of the argument advanced by brother Oostendorp that the increase in the number of congregations in our denomination makes

regional synods absolutely necessary. Our sister church in South Africa introduced regional synods when their number was still very small. They simply followed the pattern of the mother church in the Netherlands.

Brother Oostendorp also advances the argument that by introducing regional synods the number of delegates to the General Synod will be reduced, and will consequently make for more efficiency. We readily grant that the number of delegates to our Synod has grown very rapidly in the past few years, and that the number of delegates should be reduced. But can this be achieved only by introducing regional synods? Is there not a better way? Did we not as a small denomination send three ministers and three elders to Synod from each Classis as far back as 1906 and later years? As the denomination grew and the Classes increased in numbers, the delegation to Synod from each Classis was cut down one-third. In recent years an overture from a Grand Rapids Consistory was presented to Synod again to reduce the number of delegates from each Classis to one elder and one minister. The reply of Synod to this overture was not that a principle of Reformed Church polity was at stake, but it was deemed to be premature at that time to institute such a change in the number of delegates. It should also be remembered that our sister church in South Africa with its regional synods still pursues the policy of sending the minister and one elder from each congregation to the meeting of Synod, and does not send its delegates through the channel of regional synods. The same holds true of the Reformed Church in America. Delegates to their General Assembly are not voted by regional synods, but they are appointed directly by their Classes.

Brother Oostendorp comes to grips with the need of regional synods when he says, that such synods will make void the possibility of "centralization of power and executive action in small committees and permanent appointees at top levels." In proof of this claim the matter of "quotas" is mentioned and the statement is made "that our quota system has reached the end of its effective operation." I do not understand the reasoning of our brother at this juncture. Does he now mean to imply that by adding regional synods we will have a more effective method than our present "quota" method? Does he mean to assert that a Synod should no longer speak of the proportionate family share to cover the costs of operating Calvin College and Seminary, mission projects, etc.? The "quota" method of raising funds for denominational and classical and local congregational projects is not to be confused with an "assessment." A congregation can be expected to do its very best to share the burdens with others in discharging classical and synodical financial obligations, but when local conditions prevail which make this impossible the "quota" does not become a red debit debt to be repaid. When has any Synod rebuked any Canadian congregation or any church within the United States for its righteous failure to pay its full "quota"?

A more serious matter is mentioned by brother Oostendorp when he refers to a recent decision of the Synod of 1958, that a special committee be appointed by the Synodical Committee to assume responsibility for the Fund for Needy Churches. It is our opinion that the Committee for Home Missions should not be burdened with the administration of this fund. Such work does not properly belong to the realm of Home Missions. The Fund for Needy Churches is primarily a matter of finances and the proper distribution of such finances to needy churches. The Synod of 1958 wisely saw fit to appoint a committee of three competent laymen and two ministers, and left the selection of the personnel of this committee to the Synodical Committee. To the committee was also added the present treasurer of the General Committee for Home Missions to serve as an ex officio member, to provide a measure of contact between Home Missions and the Fund for Needy Churches.

Brother Oostendorp states that "ministers are not supposed to know much about this mysterious field" (finances). If that is actually the case it was time for Synod to appoint a committee capable of better financial administration. The Fund for Needy Churches was formerly administered by the Board of Home Missions, a board comprised of thirty ministers and only three lay members. The fact remains, however, that also this new committee is directly responsible to Synod, and any consistory or classis has the right to appeal any decision made by this committee to Synod for a final decision. Why then should the lay members of this new committee be referred to as "*three masters of high finance*"? (Italics mine — R.J.D.) The new committee has just begun its activities and has not in any way indicated that it intends to deal in a high-handed manner with needy churches entitled to support from the Fund for Needy Churches. If past performance by this committee had in any way given cause to call into question the integrity of these lay members, and they had actually demonstrated that they are "masters of high finance" and had actually exerted "undue pressure on small churches that are not advancing enough toward self support," there would be a justifiable complaint.

The article also states that this new committee is undertaking an impossible task to determine the needs of any local congregation on the basis of a questionnaire and personal contacts. Is it not true that each Classis is expected

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to pass first on the request for aid from this fund, to estimate carefully and accurately the needs of a local congregation making request for financial aid? There is no warrant to believe that the new assigned committee will ignore the recommendations of a Classis without sufficient grounds which can be defended by the committee in case of appeals to Synod. To cry "wolf" and "boardism" and to state that the administration of the fund from now on will be similar to that of a bank and a credit bureau is an unwarranted conclusion. It is also not true that the final arbitrator will be the new committee in charge of this fund. It can only be Synod to whom the committee is responsible in discharging its assigned mandate.

Why must a regional synod be called into existence to pass on applications for aid when a Classis, of which a local congregation in need is an integral part, is capable of furnishing all the information required to an administrative committee? A Classis is certainly much closer to a local situation than a regional synod ever could be. There would be a real point in the argumentation if each regional synod was actually capable of raising its own funds to administer to needy churches within its own domain. But as I see it at the present time proposed regional synods will have to obtain funds raised by quota from all churches within the denomination to meet the needs of such needy churches, and Synod will have to have a voice in the matter of its proper distribution and its administration.

Why the General Committee for Home Missions should become the first target to promote regional synods is difficult to understand. If I am correctly informed it is the General Committee for Home Missions which has shown a high degree of cooperation with Classes and local congregations when they were responsible for the administration of the Fund for Needy Churches.

R. J. DANHOF

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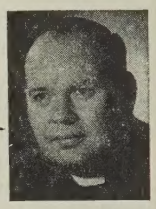

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